23 January 2023

Luigi Benedicenti, Dean
Faculty of Computer Science
University of New Brunswick
P.O. Box 4400
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3

Dear Dean Benedicenti,

I am writing as president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS), an organization of university faculty members and others dedicated to the defense of academic freedom and the merit principle in higher education. (For further information, see our website at www.safs.ca.)

The Faculty of Computer Science at the University of New Brunswick is seeking to fill a tenure track position for an Assistant Teaching Professorship (listed as Academic Employment Opportunity #22-31). The position is directed toward scholars who "focus on Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives."

Now, a scholar of EDI would investigate the nature and effects of EDI and, by thinking critically, come to conclusions about its worth. It is clear from the advertisement, though, that the Faculty of Computer Science is not seeking a scholar of EDI. Instead, the Faculty is seeking a partisan and a propagandist of it. The advertisement tells us that the "EDI Assistant Teaching Professor will promote gender balance and equity, increased participation and recognition of indigenous and underrepresented groups," and will serve as "a role model and a champion of programs." It will be his or her duty "to increase equity, diversity, and inclusion in the Faculty of Computer Science and to foster recognition of these goals."

Using academic positions to promote political or ideological ends is an abuse of the university. A university is to be a community of scholars and students united in the pursuit of knowledge. The position as described is contrary to the best university traditions of independent thought and academic freedom. Whether to support EDI and to promote its goals in one's teaching, research or service must be left to individual academics and not be required by their conditions of employment.

As well, demanding fealty to EDI is inconsistent with academic commitments to intrepid and

dispassionate research, for such a demand will cause scholars to shy away from speaking positions they believe might appear at odds with EDI means or ends. The academic mission of the Faculty of Computer Science will suffer either because promising researchers and teachers will be screened out of job competitions by this demand or because a chilling orthodoxy will envelop the Faculty.

We respectfully request that you respond to our letter. With your permission, we will post your response along with this letter on our website.

Sincerely,

Mark Mercer, PhD
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